

Sharp-tailed Grouse Harvest 2004

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Abstract

A change to the permit issuing process was initiated in 2003. A sharp-tailed grouse permit application is no longer included in the Patron License Package. Anyone who wants to apply for a sharp-tail permit has to pay a \$3 application fee; which consequently has caused fewer hunters to apply, units to be undersubscribed, and many hunters to receive two or three tags.

During the 2004 hunting season, four hundred and seventy one (471) hunters applied for 1,000 permits in four different sharp-tailed grouse management units (deer management units) in the northwestern portion of the state. The hunters harvested 40 birds, a decrease of 49% from the reported 2003 harvest.

Methods

A change to the sharp-tailed grouse permit application took effect in 2003, when the sharp-tailed grouse permit application was no longer included in the Patron License Package. All hunters that want to apply for a sharp-tail permit are required to pay a \$3 application fee, consequently fewer hunters apply. Applicants were required to apply for permits based on deer management unit boundaries. Permit levels were set by the DNR, based on sharp-tailed grouse dancing ground surveys in the spring of 2004. All permits were mailed to hunters prior to the start of the hunting season. After harvesting a sharp-tailed grouse, the hunter was required to record the date of kill and the deer management unit of kill on the registration stub, and mail it back to the DNR in Madison.

Results

Four hundred and seventy one (471) hunters applied for sharp-tailed harvest permits in four deer management units across the northwestern part of the state. Deer management units that were open to hunting are shown in Figure 1. One thousand permits (1,000) were issued in 2004, a 19% decrease from 2003. Thirty (30) hunters did not receive a permit because they requested a unit that was oversubscribed or because they applied for a unit that was not open to hunting. Harvest permit distribution is shown in Table 1.

The 2004 sharp-tailed grouse season was held from 16 October through 7 November 2004. Reported harvest as recorded on returned hunter registration stubs was 40 birds. This was much lower than the last sharp-tailed grouse harvest of 78 birds in 2003 (Figure 2). No estimate of hunter compliance was attempted. Therefore, actual harvest of sharp-tailed grouse was probably higher. The deer management unit with the highest sharp-tailed grouse harvest was 2, with 21 birds taken (Table 1). Permit success was highest in unit 8 at 11.4%. Success rates are not corrected for non-hunters, or nonresponse.

The reduced harvest numbers are likely the result of a decrease in sharp-tailed grouse permits, and population numbers. The dancing ground surveys done in the spring of 2004 showed a decrease of 15% from 2003. With lower population numbers the scattered populations are harder for hunters to find.

Most of the harvest occurred during opening weekend. Harvest on weekends generally surpassed weekday harvest. A full account of date of harvest can be found in Table 2.

Table 1. *Sharp-tailed grouse permit distribution, harvest and permit success, 2004.*

Unit	Permits Issued*	Harvest	% Success
2	640	21	3.3%
8	70	8	11.4%
9	190	5	2.6%
10	100	6	6.0%

*Includes 1st, 2nd, and 3rd tags.

Table 2. *Sharp-tailed grouse harvest by date, 2004 (Bolded dates indicate weekends).*

Date of Kill	Number
10/16/2004	5
10/17/2004	6
10/18/2004	1
10/19/2004	4
10/20/2004	4
10/21/2004	1
10/22/2004	3
10/23/2004	1
10/24/2004	4
10/25/2004	4
10/26/2004	0
10/27/2004	1
10/28/2004	0
10/29/2004	1
10/30/2004	0
10/31/2004	0
11/01/2004	0
11/02/2004	0
11/03/2004	1
11/04/2004	0
11/05/2004	0
11/06/2004	2
11/07/2004	2

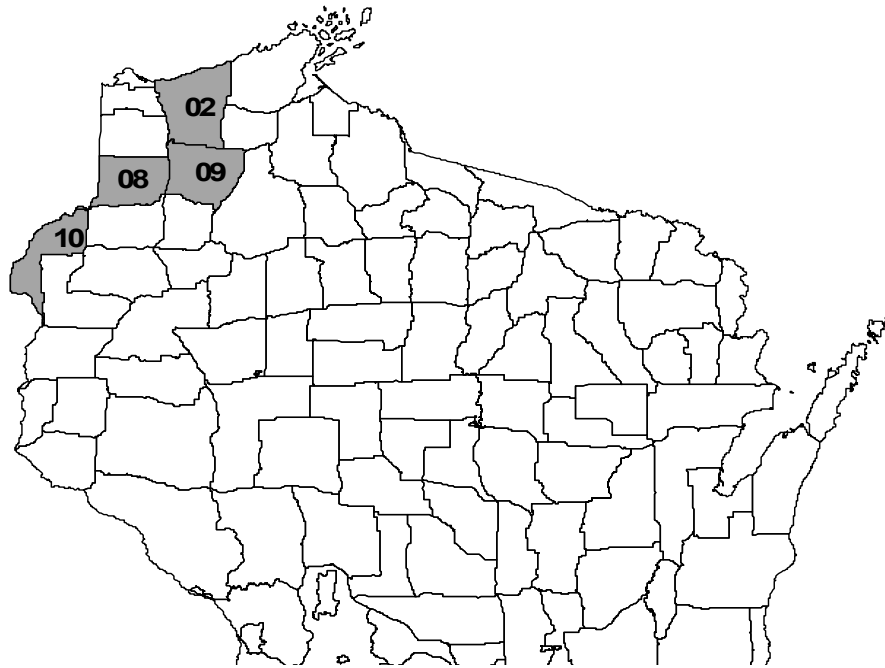


Figure 1. Shaded deer management units were open to sharp-tail hunting in 2004.

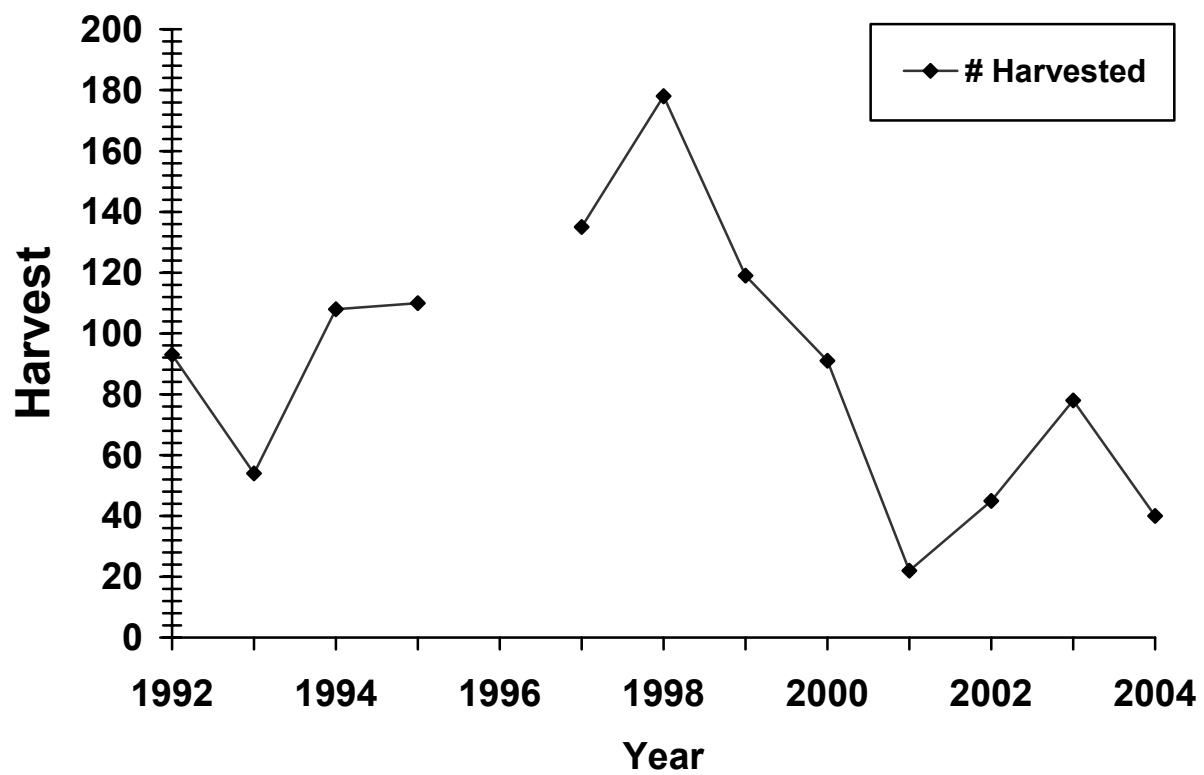


Figure 2. Sharp-tailed grouse harvest, 1992-2004.